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April 1974

MONTANA COMMITTEE FOR THE
HUMANITIES
NEWSLETTER

Montana State Library
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SOLITUDE AND COMMUNITY

"Good poems come from roots . . . The extreme and growing transience of persons, places, things, makes even more difficult the task of discovering who and what we are. Yet this remains the most important task we have to accomplish."

John Haines

"In the Western tradition of individualism there is the assumption that art can grow out of a personal or a cultural disease, and triumph over it. I no longer believe that."

Wendell Berry

Ken Kesey, former Merry Prankster and subculture King, current dairy farmer and writer, will be in Missoula during the first week of May to participate in a week-long series of public readings, discussions, workshops, panels, and seminars examining the questions of solitude and community in contemporary society. He will be joined by other nationally known figures: novelist-poet Marge Piercy, novelist-professor John Hawkes, writer-teacher-farmer Wendell Berry, and poet-professors Philip Levine and John Haines. The program, which is funded by both the Montana Committee for the Humanities and the Montana Arts Coucil, is being sponsored by the English Department of the University of Montana, in cooperation with the Missoula Arts Festival.

The need for a sense of community, as well as for periods of creative solitude, as opposed to the feelings of loneliness, futility, and political powerlessness experienced by many, will be addressed by these writers. They will participate in panel discussions with Montana writers, humanists, and other citizens, including fiction writers A. B. Gutherie, Virginia Johnson, Earl Ganz, and Ed McClanahan; poets Richard Hugo and Madeline DeFrees; professors Dexter Roberts, Ron Perrin, Jim Todd, Malinda Schaill, Tom Powers, and other members of the Missoula commumity. Panel topics include "The Artist and the Community," "Solitude and Community," "Land Use," and "The

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UPCOMING EVENTS IN THE MONTANA PUBLIC PROGRAM IN THE HUMANITIES

April

22 "Ethnic Pioneers of Montana," Glendive. Contact Marie MacDonald, Glendive Public Library, for further information.

26 "The Politics of Indian Employment: Today's Employment Alternatives for Minorities." Butte.

26 "Women in Other Societies." Great Falls Public Library, 10 AM-Noon.

29, 30, May 1-3 "Solitude and Community: Making Things Work." Described elsewhere in this newsletter.

May

3 "Ethnic Pioneers of Western Montana: Identity and Politics." First National Bank Building, Kalispell. Contact Gordon Rognlien for further information.

3 "Just Us." Great Falls Public Library, 10 AM-Noon.

5 "Montana Politics Since Statehood." Billings Public Library, with professors Mike Malone and Rick Roeder.

10 "Tenants' Rights." Great Falls Public Library, 10 AM-Noon.

10-11 "The Politics of Alternative Energy Use in Montana." Northern Hotel, Billings. Contact Kai Cochran, Northern Plains Resource Council, for further information.

12 "Montana Politics Since Statehood." Billings Public Library, with professors Mike Malone and Rick Roeder.

17 "The John Birch Society." Great Falls Public Library. 10 AM-Noon.

17-18 "The Politics of Indian Employment: Today's Employment Alternatives for Minorities." Havre.

18 "Ethnic Pioneers of Great Falls: Identity and Politics." College of Great Falls. Contact William J. Furdell for further information.

19 "Montana Politics Since Statehood." Billings Public Library, with professors Mike Malone and Rick Roeder.

22-25 "Woman: Toward a Redefinition." University Center, University of Montwna, Missoula.

24 "The Politics of Indian Employment: Today's Employment Alternatives for Minorities." Keynote speaker will be former Oklahoma Senator Fred Harris. Helena. Contact Mr. Lee Topash, Box 1176, Helena, for further information.

24 "Common Cause." Great Falls Public Library, 10 AM-Noon. "Environmental Symposium." Great Falls Civic Center Hospitality Room, 7 PM.

24-25 "Non-Violent Revolution and Morality." Eastern Montana College, Billings. Contact Mr. Bob Kelleher for further Information.

25 "Ethnic Pioneers of Montana." Eastern Montana College, Billings. Contact Dr. Robert Smith, History Department, Eastern Montana College, for further information.

26 "Montana Politics Since Statehood." Billings Public Library, with professors Mike Malone and Rick Roeder.

(Solitude and Community, cont.)

New Communitarianism." Questions of land use ethics are currently of great importance to Montanans, and the recent Supreme Court zoning decision is of particular interest to people wishing to form new kinds of living relationships. This week-long series of discussions will provide an opportunity for an in-depth analysis from a literary point of view of these and other questions of public policy and individual responsibilities and needs.

Ken Kesey's best-known works are *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes a Great Notion*. He has long been concerned with problems of individual freedom and community interaction and responsibility.

Wendell Berry has recently been addressing himself to the questions of the inter-relationship of the human and the natural communities. In his attempts to rectaim land devastated by strip-mining and decades of poor farming practices in Kentucky, he has sought to integrate his theories with pracitcal applications of his sense of responsibilities to the human and non-human community. The importance of a sense of place and rootedness is the theme of many of the essays in his recent collection, *A Continuous Harmony*.

John Hawkes' recent novel *Blood Oranges* deals with the problems of marriage, relatedness, intimacy, and sexuality in contemporary society. Marge Piercy's poetry and novels also reflect a concern with the possibilities of intimacy and her growing concern with feminist issues. Her third novel, *Small Changes*, and her fourth book of poems, *To Be of Use*, have appeared recently.

John Haines homesteaded in northern Alaska for more than fifteen years before returning to California in 1969. His poems often reflect the joys and terrors of frontier solitude, but in recent work he writes of the value of family and community life. His books include *Winter News*, *The Stone Harp, Twenty Poems*, and *Leaves and Ashes*.

Philip Levine grew up in urban Detroit where he was a factory worker and truck driver. He recently lived in Spain for two years and his poems reflect both his sense of urban life in America, and the different manifestations of community in rural Spain. Levine's books include *Not This Pig*, *They Feed They Lion*, and *1933*.

The programs, which will be of national significance because of the unique gathering of prominent writers, will be open to the public, and the MCH looks forward to a stimulating and fruitful series of exchanges between writers, academic humanists, and people from the larger community, on subjects which touch us all.

Indian Labor Conferences

There are over 30,000 Indian people in Montana, a large percentage of whom are considered "unemployable" due to a lack of basic job training and education in getting and keeping a job. The unemployment rate among Indians is six to ten times higher than that of Caucasians. Underlying these statistics are many barriers to Indian employment, including differences in culture, expectations, and lifestyle. The identification of such barriers, and the problems and politics of both potential Indian employers and employees in Montana are the focus of a series of six public forums funded by the MCH, to be held during April and May.

"The Politics of Indian Employment: Today's Employment Alternatives for Minorities" is the title of the project sponsored by the Montana United Indian Association. Each of the public forums to be held in Havre, Great Falls, Billings, Butte, Missoula, and Helena, will involve Indians, academic humanists, politicians, businesspeople, and others concerned with the humanistic and political problems of minority employment. They will examine in depth the cultural and political problems Indians and other minority group members face in seeking and retaining jobs, the problems of employers wishing to recruit and maintain minority employees, what efforts are presently being made in Montana to hire and train Indians and other minorities, how laws affect this area and possible solutions to the problems revealed.

The first of these series was held recently in Missoula. Keynote speaker for this conference was Sam Deloria, Director of the Center for the Study of Indian Law at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. A Standing Rock Sioux, Deloria addressed the issue of politics and power in the hiring of minorities. He attributed Indian manpower problems to three key elements of power in America: the economics of self-interest, inertia, and ignorance. Placing the burden on both the Indian and non-Indian communities, he said that Indians can no longer refuse to learn about non-Indian politics and economics and called on them to make it politically and economically necessary for employers to hire Indians. He added that lawsuits may be the only way to create this necessity.

Deloria also participated in a panel discussion which included Karen Fenton, director of the human resources program for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes; Vicki Peres from the equal employment division of the Department of Highways, Carroll College sociology professor Ed Bates, Henrietta Whiteman, Director of Native American Studies program at the University of Montana; Larry Simonson of the Carpenters Local 28, and Marc Cramer of the Montana Contractors' Association and the Missoula Technical Center. While presenting different perspectives of the problem, the panelists agreed that, in addition to economic and legal factors, such cultural considerations as the ceremonial and religious traditions and holidays which are important to Indian employees, should be taken into account by employers, in order to improve working relationships. After one discussion period a Great Falls businessman remarked that until then he had never understood the cultural reasons why Indian job applicants were sometimes shy and lacking in confidence during job interviews.

Keynote speaker for the final conference, to be held in Helena on May 24, will be former Senator Fred Harris of Oklahoma. He will discuss "The Politics of Indian Employment," and will be joined by Helen Red Bird Salem, anthropology professor from Monmouth College in Oregon; Mike Arnold of the Human Resources Development Institute of Washington, D.C.; MSU sociologist Wayne Larson, and Reverand Ray Brown of Helena.

For further information, contact Project Director Lee Topash, HRDI, Box 1176, Helena.

ON DEATH AND DYING

How do other cultures deal with death and burial rites? In what ways do American funeral practices reflect the values of contemporary American culture? What roles do and ought the church and state play in the control of funeral practices in Montana? To what extent do economic and professional considerations control attitudes and practices in dealing with the dead? These and other questions about the politics of death in contemporary society were the subject of an animated debate in Helena recently among an anthropologist, a state representative, a minister, the executive director of the National Funeral Directors' Association, and an audience of over 100 people.

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(Death and Dying, cont.)

Background information on these topics and the various points of view represented during the discussion was provided by a special tabloid prepared by the Borrowed Times Media Action Group. Titled *Why Is It So Hard to Die,* it included interviews with a Great Falls crematory worker, and with funeral directors from Great Falls, Butte, Missoula, Wolf Point, and Helena; articles by an anthropologist, a poet, and a memorial society member; and copies of some of the testimony for and against embalming legislation introduced during the recent session of the state legislature. (Copies of this tabloid are available free of charge through the MCH office in Missoula.)

Gary Tunnell, Instructor in the Anthropology Department at the University of Montana described the history and function of funeral rites in various cultures. He pointed out that "Funeral ritual is a way a society tells its members that life and society will prevail over death and disintegration. . . a way of re-affirming a group's solidarity in the face of death." He noted that for this reason funeral rites must be harmonious with the lifestyle of the participants, and not be dictated by outside forces.

Howard Raether, executive director of the National Funeral Directors' Association, contended that contemporary American funeral practices are demanded by the public, not imposed on the bereaved by the morticians.

Rev. Buckhardt, of the Plymoutn Congregational Church, Helena, argued that while some disreputable practices have occured in this, as in any other profession, funeral directors deserve a fair return for the services they provide.

Critics of contemporary practices of funeral directors pointed to the need for greater public awareness of the available alternatives to the mortician-arranged funeral practices. Representative Dorothy Bradley from Bozeman, sponsor of legislation to alter Montana's embalming laws, described the role of the state in the regulation of funeral practices and suggested that in the past Montana laws governing burial practices may have been overly influenced by the special interest of funeral directors because other citizens have not cared to try to influence such legislation.

These and similar topics related to death and funeral practices are also the subject of a slide show with sound which is being produced by Willy Von Bracht of Whitefish, and funded by the MCH. This show will be incorporated into a series of five symposia on death and dying which are to take place in Kalispell and Missoula during April and May. For further information on this series contact Willy Von Bracht, Whitefish, Montana.

NEW GRANTS

The Montana Committee for the Humanities has awarded sixteen new grants totaling $76,000 in the past two months. Grants were made for the following projects:

Montana's Political History, sponsored by the League of Women Voters, Bozeman. A series of five public lectures and discussions led by MSU history professors Richard Roeder and Michael Malone, on political themes in Montana history from territorial politics to the 1972 Constitutional Convention.

Future of the Flathead—It's Your Choice, sponsored by the 4-H Foundation of Flathead County. A series of discussion/dialogues utilizing existing community groups in the county, to center on the relationship of home rule offered under the new state Constitution to critical problems of water and land-use planning in the county framework.

The Politics of Indian Employment, sponsored by the Montana United Indian Association. Described elsewhere in this newsletter.

Montana and the West: New Directions, sponsored by the Council to Preserve Montana History. A three-day autumn conference incorporating lectures, discussions, and workshops for professional historians and other Montanans interested in Montana history.

Political Power and Older Americans, sponsored by an Ad-Hoc Committee with headquarters in Roundup. A series of workshops to be held in Roundup, Lewistown, Harlowton, Big Timber, Hardin, and Red Lodge to discuss the problems and potential political power of older people in rural areas.

Minorities and Political Power, sponsored by the Community Action Program of Billings and Yellowstone County. A series of lectures and discussions to examine how minority people view their role in politics, what they have to offer to American politics, and how they could increase their influence on the political system.

Woman: Toward a Redefinition, sponsored by the Women's Study Committee, Missoula. A four-day conference on contemporary images and attitudes towards women in the law, the arts, history, economics, psychology, and business.

Who Controls Culture? Sponsored by the Borrowed Times Media Action Group. Performances in Bozeman and Missoula by the San Francisco Mime Troupe, followed by discussions with Mime Troupe performers, academic humanists, and the audiences.

Montana Politics Since Statehood, sponsored by a coalition of Billings groups which includes the Friends of the Library, Billings Chamber of Commerce, the League of Women Voters, and the Junior League. A series of public lectures and discussions led by MSU professors Michael Malone and Richard Roeder.

Ethnic Pioneers of Montana: Their Influence on Montana Politics, sponsored by the Montana Library Association, Montana Author Committee, and Montana Local History Committee. A series of symposia to be held in Butte, Billings, Glendive, Great Falls, and Kalispell, to explore the relationships between the ethnic groups in each locale and the politics of the region, and to promote the writing of histories of these ethnic groups.

Non-Violent Revolution and Morality: Choosing Alternative Forms of Government, sponsored by an Ad Hoc Committee in Billings. A two-day conference to consider whether major changes should and can be made in governmental structures at the local, state, and national levels.

Montana Alternative Energy Conference: Techniques & Politics of New Energy Sources, sponsored by the Northern Plains Resource Council. A two-day series of speakers, panels, and workshops to discuss the politics and human dimensions of energy supply and use, and to demonstrate practical alternative sources of energy.

Preservation of Montana's Photographic Heritage, sponsored by the Committee for the Preservation of Montana's Photographic Heritage. A travelling exhibit of historical photographs depicting Montana's past, with accompanying lecture scripted by Montana historian K. Ross Toole. The exhibit will be followed by evening lectures and discussions led by Toole and other Montana historians.

Political Power and Energy, sponsored by the Bitterroot Resource Conservation and Development Project, Hamilton. A series of discussions in Ovando, Phillipsburg, Hamilton, Thompson Falls, and Missoula to explore the moral and political implications of energy development.

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(New Grants, cont.)

Montana Memories, sponsored by the MSU Dept. of Film and TV Production. A television presentation of a film reenacting scenes of Montana history, followed by a panel discussion of the film.

Montana Local Government Review: Citizen Forum Series, sponsored by the Bureau of Government Research and the University of Montana, Missoula. This project will complement the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Local Government, and will utilize multimedia visual aids, printed information brochures, and panel discussions. The forums will take place in eight Montana towns in September and October.

COMMITTEE NOTES

- The Montana Committee for the Humanities still has $55,000 remaining in its grants budget for this year. The money is available on a matching basis to non-profit organizations in the state desiring to sponsor programs which will bring the perspectives of academic humanists to the discussion of issues related to the theme of "Political Power in Montana." For further information, contact Dr. Bruce Sievers, Director, Montana Committee for the Humanities, 322 Turner Hall, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana 59801.
- A list of films and audio-visual selections from MCH-funded projects, which are available to the public free of charge, may be obtained by writing the MCH office in Missoula.
- The MCH staff will be happy to meet with groups across the state to explain the program and help with preparation of grant proposals.

The Montana Committee for the Humanities

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